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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 003776

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Hamas Iraq Elections in Peru
PARIS - Tuesday, June 06, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Hamas
Iraq
Elections in Peru

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Le Figaro leads with "The Wrestling Match With Hamas" and reports on the failed "inter-Palestinian talks" and Gaza's "preparations for a confrontation." The editorial by Pierre Rousselin is entitled "Mahmoud Abbas's All or Nothing Call." A separate report focuses on President Bush's ambition for an "Arab Spring," "before the Iraqi offensive, and with the intention of democratizing the Middle East. But the 'Arab Spring' lasted for only one season." (See Part C)

Le Figaro interviews Bassma Kodmani, Director of the Arab Reform Initiative, who advances the idea that "Islamic political parties are needed. A critical dialogue must be established and they must make commitments... There are liberals among the Islamists and if parties were formed, we would immediately see divisions among them: they are very divided... Religious parties which have not been included in the political process have made up this lack with a religious stance which is much more dangerous and full of intolerance..."

Le Monde carries an analysis of the situation in Iraq, entitled "Iraq: A Government, Not A State." Patrice Claude writes: "The war, or rather the wars that kill on average close to a thousand Iraqi civilians a month look increasingly deadly." Also in Le Monde, Therese Delpeche of CERI pens an op-ed praising Washington for its overtures towards Iran. (See Part C)

La Croix carries an op-ed by journalist Pierre Servent entitled "Afghanistan, the Metastasis of the War in Iraq" in which Servent writes: "Three factors have come together to explain the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, while the situation in Iraq is far from stabilized: a transfer of know-how between Iraq and Afghanistan, the role of drug dealers and the growing skepticism of the Afghan population. One thing is certain, the Iraqi guerrilla is bringing its methods and its professionalism to Afghanistan."

Liberation leads with a poll showing that socialist presidential hopeful Segolene Royal remains the preferred candidate for socialist sympathizers. Liberation's lead international story is devoted to Peru's presidential election and the victory of Alan Garcia (See Part C).

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Hamas

"Mahmoud Abbas's All or Nothing Call"
Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/06): "Abbas, despite his shaky position since Hamas was elected, remains the only element of hope for those who want to keep Gaza and the West Bank from slipping into a civil war. With a daring no one suspected he had, Mahmoud Abbas is playing an all or nothing game with Hamas. In the absence of an agreement, Mahmoud Abbas will submit his plan to a referendum. Abbas's game is clever, maybe too clever... But the game is worth the candle, although Abbas is very much alone. His initiative elicited only silence from the international community: when the Palestinians voted for Hamas, the West cut off their food supply. Now that their President is trying to find an out, everyone is watching his struggle with detachment, as if we could afford to see the Palestinian Authority fall apart... The ultimatum was set for last night. A referendum could be called for any moment. It will be the moment of truth. Abbas is playing his all: this vote is the only way he can regain legitimacy. Meanwhile Hamas considers a referendum to be illegal: the confrontation could erupt any moment. Abbas's initiative was the least of several evils: it will succeed only if international diplomacy has the courage to help him. Since democracy is the model being offered to the Middle East, no one can oppose a democratic vote."

"Gaza Prepares for Confrontation"

Patrick Saint Paul in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/06): "Analysts

believe that the Palestinians voted for Hamas in order to put an end to Fatah's corruption. The referendum proposed by Abbas has every chance of passing, according to the polls. But his wager is very risky, because the Palestinians, despite the crisis, continue to support Hamas. In today's climate, a confrontation could erupt if the political situation comes to a head. Meanwhile the militia on both sides was getting ready last night, hours before the end of the ultimatum."

"Faced with Authoritarian Regimes, the 'Arab Spring' Is Fading"
Pierre Prier in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/06): "Three years after President Bush announced his ambition for an 'Arab Spring,' the dynamic is at a standstill. Iraq is running towards chaos and regimes are adopting harsher lines... Has the Greater Middle East disappeared into the Iraqi quagmire? Some want to believe it can still happen. Says a high-ranking Arab diplomat: 'America's pressure on governments is relenting because of the war in Iraq, Iran and the Hamas victory, but the Americans are still convinced the situation needs to be unraveled.' The U.S. is sending out contradictory messages: while the State Department asked for the liberation of Ayman Nour in Egypt, President Bush was welcoming Gamal Mubarak... America's plan has found its limitations: democratization is not going as it should. Wherever elections have taken place, Islamic movements have come out on top. To the great disappointment of the U.S., according to Middle East specialist Olivier Roy: 'there is no democracy without political legitimacy, and no political legitimacy without taking into account Arab nationalism and Islamism. But the U.S. mistrusts both.'"

Iraq

"Iraq: A Government, Not A State"
Patrice Claude in left-of-center Le Monde (06/06): "Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, this war has had its high and low points. Out of charity we will not set out the list of the dozens of times that the military has announced 'imminent victory' or a 'decisive turn' from Baghdad, Washington or London. Today the only thing that is certain is that some 50,000 Iraqi civilians have lost their lives and 28,700 are in prison, the guerilla - largely Sunni - appears to be at least as powerful as it was last year... In this context it is understandable that George Bush and Tony Blair are emitting a number of prudently optimistic statements as to the 'unity' and 'stabilization' of the country promised by the Iraqi government. After all, the only chance that the two men have to save their electoral fate... rests in great part on the shoulders of the Iraqi PM... It took six long weeks of negotiations with the various political factions in Iraq to bring together a 'government of national unity...' Three weeks later the country is still waiting to find the one in a million, non-sectarian people to take on the three decisive ministries: defense, interior and national security. Unity? What unity?"

Iran

"Washington's Extended Hand"
Therese Delpech, researcher at CERI in left-of-center Le Monde (06/06): "Washington's anathema against the countries in the 'Axis of Evil,' where Iran had a leading position, the speeches on 'regime change,' the plans for democratizing the Middle East, did not predispose the U.S. to do in 2006 what no other administration had done since 1979, regardless of the political evolutions in Iran... It is the State Department, and not the Pentagon that has the lead on the Iranian issue... With this surprise announcement, Condoleezza Rice has shown that she has won a long and significant battle within the Administration, especially with regard to Dick Cheney and his team... [Washington's] strategy has paid off. Even before the beginning of the meeting in Vienna, the U.S. got the support of Moscow and Beijing, but also of Mohamed el Baradei the Director General of the IAEA. And the results announced from Vienna on June 1 on the agreement reached by the 5 permanent members of the UNSC were unhelped for. There is no doubt that this outcome could not have been reached without the intervention of the State Department."
Elections in Peru

"Influences"

Antoine de Gaudemar in left-of-center Liberation (06/06): "Alan Garcia's resurrection is due more to fears elicited by his 'Indian' adversary than to his own success, despite his promises that he has changed. His adversary was also hampered by the support he got from Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. For this Peruvian election is to be placed within the context of the entire Latin American continent, which is experiencing a complete political make over. Country after country, the left has been gaining ground... In this regard, Chavez's interventionism in Peru's elections stands witness to the battle being waged for leadership within Latin America's left, between the moderates who favor social democracy and the more nationalistic who aggressively oppose imperialism." STAPLETON